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International Species Conservation Funds

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International species conservation is addressed by several funds, including those under the Multinational Species Conservation Fund (MSCF) and the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (NMBCF). This report provides a brief overview of MSCF and NMBCF and their funding and legislative status.

Multinational Species Conservation Fund

The MSCF, which currently benefits tigers, the six species of rhinoceroses, Asian and African elephants, marine turtles, and great apes (gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans, and the various species of gibbons), has generated a tremendous amount of constituent interest. The fund supports conservation efforts benefitting these species, often in conjunction with efforts under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), to which the United States is a party.¹

The MSCF provides funding in the form of technical and cost-sharing grants to range countries for the conservation of African and Asian elephants, rhinoceroses, tigers, great apes, and marine turtles and their habitats. The grants target species and address habitat conservation, law enforcement, and technical assistance for conserving species under the MSCF. Efforts to conserve species under the MSCF benefit from funding and in-kind support provided by partners and collaborators. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), which runs the program, almost \$92.0 million was provided by partners and collaborators for efforts under the MSCF from FY2012 to FY2016. This figure is nearly double the amount appropriated (\$55.0 million) for these efforts during the same period. According to FWS, the African Elephant Conservation Fund provided funding for projects that aimed to conserve forest elephants in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These activities included assisting the Congolese National Wildlife Agency and efforts to reduce to poaching in the country and the ivory trade throughout the world.

Funds also might come from purchases of the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp (authorized under P.L. 111-241).² On September 22, 2011, the U.S. Postal Service introduced the “Save Vanishing Species” semipostal stamp.³ Since its issuance, more than 35 million stamps have been sold, raising approximately \$3.8 million for activities that conserve species supported by the MSCF.⁴

For FY2018, the Administration requested \$9.0 million for species programs under the MSCF, which is approximately \$2.0 million below the FY2017 level of funding. Funding for these species programs comes to FWS within the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations act. **Table 1** shows funding levels for the MSCF and the NMBCF for FY2012-FY2017 and the FY2018 request. Funds from the MSCF are authorized to be expended under six acts, described below:

¹ For more information, see, CRS Report RL31654, *The Endangered Species Act: A Primer*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted) and CRS Report RS21157, *International Species Conservation Funds*, by (name redacted) and (name redacted).

² Proceeds from the sale of certain postage stamps would be used to help implement the MSCF. According to P.L. 111-241, funds from the stamps should not offset annual appropriations to the MSCF, nor should they be taken into account in any decision related to funding MSCF or FWS. The stamps would be available to the public for at least two years.

³ For more information, see CRS Report R44809, *Multinational Species Conservation Fund Semipostal Stamp*, by (name redacted) (name redacted) and (name redacted).

⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Justifications*, Department of the Interior, Budget Justification, 2017, pp. MS-7.

- The African Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §4201) authorizes matching grants for conservation, research, management, and protection of this species. Projects are carried out in cooperation with African nations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Appropriations are authorized for \$5.0 million annually from FY2007 to FY2012.
- The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund (16 U.S.C. §5301) assists in conserving tigers and the six species of rhinos. Matching grants support governments and NGOs in projects to conserve habitat, survey populations, improve law enforcement, and educate the public. Appropriations are authorized for \$10.0 million annually from FY2007 to FY2012.
- The Asian Elephant Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §4261) is similar to the above programs in purposes and scope. An additional emphasis, where the elephants are draft animals, is to promote their humane treatment and encourage captive breeding. Appropriations are authorized for \$5.0 million annually from FY2007 to FY2012.
- The Great Ape Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §6303) is similar to the above programs in purposes and scope. Species of interest are lowland and mountain gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos (a species closely related to chimpanzees), orangutans, and the species of gibbons (Genus *Hylobates*—about 8-10 species, according to anthropologists). Appropriations are authorized for \$5.0 million annually from FY2006 to FY2010.
- The Marine Turtle Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §6601) was passed on July 2, 2004. This law provides grants for the conservation of marine turtle populations and their nesting habitats in the wild and establishes a marine turtle conservation fund within the MSCF. It also authorizes \$5 million in annual appropriations from FY2005 to FY2009 for conservation efforts and establishes a marine turtle conservation fund within the MSCF.
- Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act (39 U.S.C. 416 note, as amended) requires the sale of an MSCF semipostal stamp, the proceeds of which are divided equally among existing conservation funds. Authorization for the MSCF stamp is set to expire in September 2017. This expiration does not preclude the U.S. Postal Service from continuing to issue and sell the stamp, should it choose to do so.

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund

The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§6101-6109) provides grants for the conservation of hundreds of bird species that migrate among North and South America and the Caribbean. The act requires spending 75% of the funds on projects outside of the United States. The act was reauthorized in 2006. The legislation expands the program to include Canada, authorizes appropriations until 2009, and creates a separate fund for the NMBCF. Authorization for appropriations expired in FY2010. The FY2018 request for this program is \$3.9 million, equivalent to the FY2017 enacted level. (See **Table 1**.)

Legislative Activity

The 115th Congress is considering reauthorizing funding for several conservation funds organized under the MSCF. A summary of these efforts is listed below:

- H.R. 227 and S. 826 propose to extend to FY2022 the authorization for funding the African Elephant Conservation Fund, the Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Fund, the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, the Great Ape Conservation Fund, and the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund at their current levels.
- H.R. 1247 and S. 480 would reauthorize the Multinational Species Conservation Funds Semipostal Stamp Act by extending the availability of stamps to the public to 10 years instead of 6 years

Table I. Appropriations for Multinational Species Conservation Fund and Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, FY2012-FY2018 Request

(in U.S. \$ thousands)

Multinational Species Conservation Fund	FY2012 Enacted	FY2013 Continuing Resolution	FY2014 Enacted	FY2015 Enacted	FY2016 Enacted	FY2017 CR Baseline	FY2018 Request
African Elephant	\$1,645	\$1,655	\$1,582	\$1,582	\$2,582	\$2,577	\$2,101
Tiger and Rhinos	2,471	2,481	2,440	2,440	3,440	3,433	2,798
Asian Elephant	1,645	1,660	1,557	1,557	1,557	1,554	1,267
Great Apes	2,059	2,072	1,975	1,975	1,975	1,971	1,607
Marine Turtle	1,646	1,656	1,507	1,507	1,507	1,505	1,227
Total MSCF	9,466	9,524	9,061	9,061	11,061	11,040	9,000
Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund	3,786	3,809	3,660	3,660	3,910	3,903	3,900

Source: Congressional Budget Justifications for the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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